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By: MB NARA Date: 3/1/02

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SOC 11-5 IRAN

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F-80003-2008

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO: ANKARA, KABUL, PARIS FOR CUSACK

FROM : Amembassy TEHRAN

SUBJECT : NARCOTICS: Iran's Determination to Continue Poppy Cultivation

REF : Embassy's A-135, May 4, 1970 (NOTAL); A-5, January 7, 1970

DATE: June 9, 1970

Iran's determination to continue its domestic opium production program so long as its neighbors continue to produce opium, was again evidenced in two recent developments:

1. In a television interview on May 25 the Shah restated the reasons why Iran had resumed poppy cultivation and instituted the death penalty for narcotics smuggling, noting that it was ridiculous for Iran to have banned opium and given up foreign exchange from legal international sales, only to find its addicts exporting large sums for smuggled opium and its prisons full of thousands of Iranians convicted of narcotics offenses. He said that so long as Iran's neighbors continue poppy cultivation Iran has "no alternative but to continue to do the same to fulfill our local needs." But added that "if the cultivation of poppies in our neighboring countries comes to a stop, we would also put an end to cultivation." (See Enclosure No. 1 for full statement.)

2. The press on May 28 reported that the Ministry of Land Reform had doubled the acreage to be allotted for the coming year to poppy cultivation raising the total area authorized for planting for the 1971 crop to 12,000 hectares. (See Enclosure No. 2 for comparative area break-down.)

Enclosures:

1. Excerpt from the Shah's Television Interview
2. Opium Poppy Cultivation Area Break-down

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006

Decentral following June 1971.

FORM 4-62 DS-323

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Drafted by:

POL/M:JH *Reese Jr.* js 6/8/70

Contents and Classification Approved by:
DCM:NGThacher

Clearances:

POL:DM *Goussaint*

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COMMENT: Obviously the GOI still considers it essential, in order to eliminate the heavy illicit importation of opium into Iran, to pursue vigorously its two-pronged program of strict anti-smuggling controls and of controlled provision of home-grown opium for incurable Iranian addicts and those under treatment. As previously reported, there is evidence that the program has begun to affect smuggling. There seems little prospect that Iran will consider restricting or eliminating poppy cultivation before seeing persuasive evidence of poppy elimination and control in Turkey and perhaps even Afghanistan. However the Shah's comments that production will continue in order to meet "local needs" may indicate that the GOI has abandoned its earlier notion of producing for export. Opium production to date has been low and costs of production have far exceeded world market prices; perhaps the hard reality that Iran simply cannot compete profitably in the declining world market has finally been recognized. Collection of the 1970 opium crop is now in its final stages, but the Embassy has no estimate yet of the total quantity produced or even of the number of hectares actually cultivated out of the 6,200 hectares previously authorized for planting.

MACARTHUR

D. MacArthur

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